Divine Record: Prologue

By: Frost190

Days before Tower of Hanoi emerges, Ai finds traces of Knights of Hanoi frequently going to a labyrinth that is rumored to hold DIVINE-Attribute deck. Kusanagi contact his old acquaintance, Tsurugi the cyber sleuth, to help investigate the labyrinth. Entering the labyrinth together, they encounter a challenge beyond what they imagined. Prologue to an upcoming AU series.

Status: complete

Published: 2024-04-22

Words: 15987

Rated: Fiction K+ - Language: English - Genre: Sci-Fi/Friendship - Characters: Yusaku F./Playmaker, Shoichi K., OC, Ai - Reviews: 6 - Favs: 4 - Follows: 3

Original source: https://www.fanfiction.net/s/14349540/1/Divine-Record-Prologue

Exported with the assistance of FicHub.net

Divine Record: Prologue

Introduction
Divine Record: Prologue

Divine Record: Prologue

AUTHOR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Hello, everyone.

Frost190 here.

Here it is, my very first *Yu-Gi-Oh! VRAINS* fanfic.

For those who also read my ARC-V stories, I initially had planned to publish this story after finishing my ARC-V fanfic, *The Last Supreme King Dragon*, but ideas for this fanfic kept popping out one after another to the point that I had written down the ideas and summaries from the very first down to the very last chapter. I also gained new ideas for the final arc of *The Last Supreme King Dragon* and would like to incorporate those ideas, so some careful considerations must be made. I couldn't concentrate on writing *The Last Supreme King Dragon*, and thus, I decided to put *The Last Supreme King Dragon* on hold and start this fanfic instead because I'm worried that forcing myself to continue writing *The Last Supreme King Dragon* would only lessen the quality of the writing.

I was inspired to write this story after reading and following scififan599's VRAINS fanfic, *Yu-Gi-Oh! VRAINS: Hidden Memories* . Like *Hidden Memories*, this story follows an OC I made, Kento Hijiri, who is the seventh victim of the Lost Incident. But mind you, unlike *Hidden Memories* that changed the number of children from 6 to 8, I only add Kento and no more.

Before starting the series, I decided to do this one-shot as some sort of introduction for my upcoming series. Think of this as a pilot chapter or prologue of the series. Because I'm busy, it would take a while until I'm starting the series, but I assure you I already planned everything from start to finish.

I hope you enjoy it.

---

5 Years Ago

It was a beautiful green meadow. The grass flattened under the wind in beautiful shimmering waves, each blade turned momentarily to reflect brilliant moonlight, catching the light in a way that shows it isn't one green but many. The vast night sky filled with stars, giving a sense of warmth springing from the cold.

One wouldn't expect at first glance that this meadow and the night sky was entirely made of data.

In the meadow, lies a small humanoid being with pointed top and clown shoe-like feet. He has markings over his purple-tinted black body, in the shape of thin lines and circles, which are tinted with a purple color. He has oval-shaped, yellow-orange eyes. Lying next to him was a deep, purple-colored round-shaped creature without hands and only a pair of feet with an arrow-shaped tail.

Both were staring at the starry sky, enjoying the beautiful view of thousands of stars. One of those stars seemed to glow brighter than all the rest, and then it slid through the sky, falling. The humanoid being then closed his eyes, spreadeagled on the grass asleep.

"Having a fun time slacking off, Dark Ignis?"

The voice jolted him awake.

"Argh!" He yelled, sitting up before turning to the one who called out to him.

It was another humanoid being, but with an oval-shaped head with five strands pointing down in resemblance of hair and boot-like legs. He has markings in the shape of thin lines and a wing-shaped marking on his chest over his silver-tinted white body. His eyes were diamond-shaped and arctic blue in color. Next to him was a creature

with white fur, green hands and feet, a pair of purple eyes, and a golden halo above its head.

"Don't scare me like that, Divine Ignis!" Dark Ignis protested, scratching his head self-consciously. "How did you even know that I am here?"

"Asking the monsters." Divine Ignis answered like it was the most obvious answer.

"Right… your ability to communicate with monsters is veeery convenient~" Dark Ignis said with sarcastic tone.

"Everyone is having a meeting right now. Though Flame Ignis and Wind Ignis said that your presence won't be necessary since you'll just be lazing around again anyway, Water Ignis and I beg to differ. How about taking things seriously for once?" Divine Ignis told him with a scolding tone.

"Even without me, everyone is doing a fine job. Just have your meeting without me." Dark Ignis dismissed his friend, "Better yet, why don't you two join us? Let's play at the waterfall like yesterday!"

"No can do. This meeting seems very important, so skipping is not an option. Right, Saint Kuriboh?" Divine Ignis immediately refused, and Saint Kuriboh also nodded.

"Boo! You've been busy lately. You've been going out of Cyberse World, checking how the outside world is and observing humans. It won't hurt to skip one or two meetings! You're the only one who likes to play with me and Linkuriboh." Dark Ignis pouted.

"Rikuriku!" Linkuriboh responded in agreement.

Ever since they created their world, Dark Ignis always let his brethren do all the work while he just played around. As a result, he wasn't well-liked by the other Ignis (according to his own words), except one. Divine Ignis was the only one who's willing to hang out

with him whenever he had free time. Most of his interactions with the rest other than Divine Ignis were him being lectured, or him pulling a prank or being pranked by other Ignis.

"Perhaps the others would be more willing to spend time with you if you do even just a little bit of your work." Divine Ignis replied with a sigh at his friend's reluctance but took a seat next to the Dark Ignis.

"Why are you visiting the outside world and observing humans anyway? What's the fun in that?" Dark Ignis asked. He couldn't comprehend the curiosity that Divine Ignis has for humans. He and the other Ignis were already satisfied enough to live peacefully in their home world, having no interest whatsoever in humans. However, Divine Ignis was different. On a regular basis, he would sometimes leave for a while to the outside world and observe humans before returning.

"We were created to become the successor of humanity. Is it not natural to be curious of humans who we are supposed to guide? Each one of us is also based on a human, aren't we?" Divine Ignis answered, looking up at the sky, mind drifted to the humans he had been observing all these years, especially the one whom he was based on.

"Did you meet humans when going outside? Like your Origin, maybe?" Dark Ignis asked, now curious what else his friend did when he was out. When someone becomes curious, they're bound to try out things with their own hands. Of course, Dark Ignis didn't really believe that his friend would go as far as speaking directly to a human-

"Yes, I met a human, but not my Origin." Divine Ignis confirmed, shocking the other Ignis.

"You did?! Who!? Why?!" Dark Ignis asked, leaning his face closer as he demanded an answer. He never thought a day would come for an Ignis to interact directly with a human.

Divine Ignis went lost in thought, not answering the Dark Ignis' question for a moment. He then pushed Dark Ignis' face away from him, making sure his personal space wasn't invaded anymore before turning to his friend and finally spoke,

"It's…"

GRRRRRR

A growling sound halted them. The earth trembled, prompting Dark Ignis to stand up. Linkuriboh and Saint Kuriboh ran in circles, making a panicking noise.

"W-what's going on?! Why is there an earthquake?!" Dark Ignis looked around them in confusion as the earthquake hadn't stopped.

The starry sky above them cracked. From the cracks, two gigantic black dragons emerged. They didn't have limbs and were more like serpents. They have six arrow-like protrusions, three on top of its body and three below, each connected to neon-green spheres that seemed to serve as its wings.

The dragons opened their mouths, each unleashing a stream of flames that burned their surroundings. The meadow and the forest not too far that were once so alive in a matter of seconds have been rendered lifeless sticks of charcoal, no more vibrant than the old lampposts in the city. The fire burns like a temper, as if the leaping flames have a terrible anger toward the world they were living in.

"Oh my God! What the heck is that?!" Dark Ignis began to flail as he witnessed the meadow that he loved started to be burned to ashes.

"We're under attack! Come on, we must go help the others!" Divine Ignis took Dark Ignis by his left wrist and pulled him up, flying in the direction where the rest of their friends were gathering.

"Linkuriboh go the cave at the waterfall! Hide there until it's safe!" Dark Ignis told his Kuriboh who could only watch in dismay as its

master left, but still followed the order given. Saint Kuriboh, on the other hand, returned to Divine Ignis' Deck.

Everything happened so fast. When they realized it, the ground beneath them was broken apart, and lava spewed forth from them. Massive parts of their home had been consumed by magma and the once starry night sky was now tainted with nothing but black clouds. Then, they saw it. The tower where all the Ignis were supposed to gather for their meeting. One of the black dragons circled around the tower and there was a red circle resembling a magic circle with five white spheres, four at each side and one at the center.

From the sphere at the bottom left, an Ignis with a light lemon-yellow body with dandelion yellow diamond markings came out.

"The Knights of Hanoi are attacking the Cyberse World!" He exclaimed while trying to move his body.

"But we're trapped, so we can't fight back!" Another Ignis stated distressfully. He has a massive build and has bistre-brown markings all over his ultra-orange bulky body.

"That's… !" The blue female Ignis with twin pigtails that levitated from her head that was trapped in the sphere at the center noticed Dark Ignis and Divine Ignis were coming.

"Thanks for waiting! The saviors have arrived!" Dark Ignis announced his and Divine Ignis' arrival with triumphant tone. The Divine Ignis, on the other hand, looked at them worriedly.

"The Knights of Hanoi did this? Why…?! I don't understand… Why would Dr. Kogami…" Divine Ignis said in disbelief.

"Oh my! You're all trapped? Good thing we didn't attend the meeting." Dark Ignis referred to himself and Divine Ignis. It was fortunate that they didn't attend the meeting. Otherwise, they would've been trapped along with them at the enemies' mercy.

"Divine Ignis, can you free them from the trap?" Dark Ignis asked.

"I could but it'll take a while. I don't think the Knights of Hanoi would give us the time to free our friends." Divine Ignis said with regretful tone. It frustrated him that he couldn't do anything to save their friends.

"Then we only have one choice to save everyone!" Dark Ignis faced the Divine Ignis. In their situation, they only have one way to get them out of this dire situation. Without needing to be told, Divine Ignis understood what Dark Ignis was telling him.

"So be it then." Divine Ignis reluctantly agreed.

"Here we go!"

Dark Ignis and Divine Ignis flew up until they were out of the Cyberse World. Together, the two of them began cutting off the signal between their home world and the outside world. On the bright side, this would keep their home world and their friends safe from the threat of Knights of Hanoi. The downside, however, is that they wouldn't be able to return to their home world. Considering how their friends were trapped and the two of them were the only ones who could move, there was no other option if they wanted to save everyone.

"Piece of cake!" Dark Ignis said proudly.

However, they didn't have time to celebrate yet. One of the dragons came at them, opening its mouth to devour the two Ignis.

"Watch out!" Dark Ignis pushed Divine Ignis out of the way, causing the dragon to eat his body save for one eyeball.

"Dark Ignis!" Divine Ignis yelled in terror as he watched his friend become nothing more than an eyeball. He was about to reach out to him until the Dark Ignis shouted at him.

"Go! We must split up! It'll be more difficult for them to find us if we split up!" Dark Ignis told him. Immediately after he did so, he went the other way, silently telling his friend they must go their separate ways.

Divine Ignis could understand the logic of his suggestion, but the thought of leaving his friend who has been reduced to a mere eyeball left a bad taste. Still, he knew he mustn't let his emotions get the better of him. For now, they'll be separated, but one day, he knows they'll meet again.

"Dammit!" Divine Ignis cursed before making his escape toward the opposite direction of the Dark Ignis.

Witnessing the two Ignis went their separate ways, the man who commanded for the Cyberse World's destruction clicked his tongue. He was a man with dark crimson hair and red highlights clicked his tongue. His ears were pierced with Egyptian-style earrings with a blue diamond and a gold bullet "token". He wore a tan-colored visor giving him yellow featureless eyes, designed with a white casing and a diamond-shaped pattern of white dots with red centers, linked together by a white circle that surrounds a white dot in the center of his forehead that suggests the barrel of a gun.

"Track them down! Only those two Ignis knows the Cyberse World's location!" He ordered.

"Wait, Revolver!"

A man yelled out from behind. A tall man, who has fair skin, black and grey hair and mustache, and a pair of yellow eyes. He wears a white coat with red outlines, a dark undershirt with red stripes, some black pants and a pair of brown shoes.

"Forget about the Divine Ignis. Focus our resources on tracking the Dark Ignis instead. In his current state, he's easier to deal with. We'll worry about the Divine Ignis later." The man instructed. The younger man, Revolver, seemed confused but obeyed the order.

"Change of plan! Forget the Divine Ignis, track down the Dark Ignis! Don't let it get away!" Revolver gave out the order, turning the attention fully to the direction where the Dark Ignis escaped to.

The older man closed his eyes, fingers holding the spot between his eyebrows.

"Are you all right, Dr. Kogami?"

A young man appeared from behind. He has pale blond hair with the left side of his face covered by a black and red colored eye-mask. His attire consists of a red shirt girded with large green material, a red bow tie made of string around his neck, and a belt. He also wears a white rib-length jacket with green patterns and sleeves that end between his wrists and elbows.

"Galehaut." Dr. Kogami addressed the younger man.

"You don't look well, Dr. Kogami." Galehaut replied with a concerned voice.

"Yes. I was a bit frustrated because we were so close to destroy them." Dr. Kogami said with a disappointed sigh. "But I can't say I didn't expect this. While Dark Ignis was a surprise, I had expected that Divine Ignis could pull out such a trick."

"Pardon if I am wrong, but to me, it sounds like you think highly of Divine Ignis' capabilities." Toa had listened to Dr. Kogami talking about the Ignis many times before. However, this was the first time he spoke about a particular Ignis that way.

"Indeed. It is as you said. I believe that Divine Ignis is different from the rest of the Ignis. He is created from *that* extraordinary data I got after all." Dr. Kogami emphasized. Without naming the so-called data, he and his assistants would know what data he was talking about.

"The only being capable of creating Divine-Attribute cards. Even after much extensive research we've done, we couldn't make a single copy of those cards." Galehaut must admit that he is amazed by Divine Ignis. He managed to create a brand-new Attribute that has never been seen before. Not only that, the creation of those cards were so complex even for Dr. Kogami's intellect that attempts they tried to make one only resulted in bugs. It's no wonder that Dr. Kogami paid attention to Divine Ignis in particular.

"You believe the capabilities that Divine Ignis holds, so shouldn't that be all the more reason to chase after him as well? Won't it be dangerous if we leave him be?" Galehaut asked.

"He is not a fool. No matter how powerful and intelligent he is, we have more advantage in numbers. He won't do something foolish like confronting us head on with so much for him at stake." Dr. Kogami is aware that neither Ignis would be willing to take a risk of exposing themselves into danger since not only them, their Ignis brethren lives are also at stake. They also know that as their creator, he is capable of using their algorithm and use it against them, making it even riskier should they confront Knights of Hanoi.

Revolver approached the two of them. Judging from the frown on his face, he most likely has failed.

"I'm sorry, Father. Even though he has weakened, Dark Ignis still managed to get away from us." Revolver apologized to Dr. Kogami, looking down in shame.

"By now, Divine Ignis would've already hidden himself away. It'll be a waste of time to look for him. Dark Ignis, on the other hand, is weakened because he partially lost his data. He won't be able to hide as efficiently as the Divine Ignis. We'll get his tail sooner or later if we regularly observe the network." Dr. Kogami looked at several screens that shows various network domains, looking for any sign of an Ignis.

"Still, if we somehow found a clue about Divine Ignis, we'll attack and make him spill out the location of the Cyberse World. Just inform me beforehand when you found a clue about Divine Ignis. Never act on your own without my permission." Dr. Kogami instructed his son and Galehaut.

"Understood." Revolver and Galehaut replied.

"Continue observing SOL Technologies and report their movements. They'll learn about the escaping Ignis soon and try to get ahold of them. We mustn't let them get the Ignis before us. Relay what I told you to Faust, Baira, Dr. Genome, and Specter."

Revolver and Galehaut obeyed, leaving the place to carry out their given orders.

Being left alone, Dr. Kogami looks at the screen showing the replay footage of Divine Ignis and Dark Ignis making their escape after they hid the Cyberse World. Staring at them, his eyes glint with guilt. His heart aches at the thought of having to destroy his own creations.

However, the results of the simulations he had done were absolute. To prevent the extinction of mankind, the Ignis must be destroyed at all costs. As their creator, it's his responsibility to see through their end now that he realized his dream would never come to fruition.

"There is no other choice. This is the only way to save humanity…"

Apartment - Den City - 5 Years Later

It has been 5 years since Dark Ignis and Divine Ignis hid the Cyberse World and escaped from Knights of Hanoi. After years of hiding from them, he finally confronted them face-to-face together with his partner, Yusaku Fujiki, otherwise known as Playmaker in LINK VRAINS, who has his own personal vendetta against Knights of Hanoi. Though he said partner, this term was only one-sided on his part, because unfortunately, Yusaku only considered him as a

hostage or bait to lure out Knights of Hanoi. Alongside Yusaku, there's also Kusanagi, a hotdog vendor who was secretly a hacker providing support for Playmaker.

He was even given a nickname, Ai, a pun for him being an A.I. and how he only had the form of an eyeball during their first meeting. It's a name with no deeper meaning and given so lazily that the Ignis cried, but it didn't take a long time to grow fond of the name. On the bright side, it was a cute and simple, and much better than pet names like Pochi and Ponta that Kusanagi once suggested as an example. If he had to choose between the three of those names, then Ai was certainly more preferrable.

He was currently locked into Yusaku's Duel Disk, preventing him from leaving it without Yusaku's permission. It's not a comfortable home since his movement was restricted, though with the help of Yusaku's robot maid, Roboppi, whom he affectionally took under his wing as his 'underling', Ai was now working on Yusaku's Duel Disk to change into a drone for him. That way, he can move around even without needing Yusaku by his side. Of course, this was still a work in progress that must be kept secret from his said partner.

Ai had his reservations, but after a while, it didn't feel so bad living in Yusaku's apartment. He get to watch soap operas and access forum with Roboppi's help while Yusaku left him alone at home. Better than during the past 5 years he must moved around to hide from Hanoi's eyes. This moment was one such time where he's being left at the apartment while Yusaku is out, allowing Ai a free time to do whatever he wants until Yusaku return. Now, Ai was having a fun time searching through the internet, specifically forum or any social media that may have a clue about Divine Ignis. For the past 5 years, he managed to hide well and now he was hidden by Yusaku and Kusanagi. However, there was no sign of his best friend to this day.

"Big Bro, have you found what you are looking for?" Roboppi asked the Dark Ignis.

"No. I found nothing at all! Zero! Ugh… where in the world is he?!" Ai sighed in exasperation. He had believed that Divine Ignis would eventually show up or at least send some sort of message to him after he appeared with Playmaker. People might not paying attention to him and more to Playmaker, but he was sure that Divine Ignis would notice him.

"What are you doing right now? Where are you?" Ai slumped back into the Duel Disk, exhausted from hours of searching only to find nothing.

"Big Bro, I think there's something that maybe can help you." Roboppi said as he noticed a certain topic.

"Really?!" Ai immediately came out again, looking at the digital screen that shows the topic Roboppi was pointing at.

"This is… !"

Cafe Nagi - Central Plaza - Den City

"DIVINE-Attribute cards?" Kusanagi repeated while looking skeptically at Ai.

Not long after he read the discussion topic that Roboppi told him, Yusaku returned to his apartment to pick up his Duel Disk and Ai. Once they arrived at Kusanagi's hotdog truck, Ai quickly brought up the topic to Yusaku and Kusanagi as something that is worth investigating.

The topic of the discussion was a rumor about the supposedly non-existent DIVINE Attribute cards hidden inside an underground website. The rumor about DIVINE-Attribute cards have been going around since decades ago, though as times passed it became nothing more than a legend since never any of the circulating rumors were proven true. Stories about DIVINE-Attribute also lessened ever since Playmaker and Knights of Hanoi made themselves widely known in the open, instantly becoming a public sensation.

However, that didn't mean stories about DIVINE-Attribute stopped completely. There were still stories about it, they're not known simply because they were overshadowed by the news about Playmaker and Knights of Hanoi.

"Yeah! I think we should investigate this!" Ai insisted.

"We don't have time to waste for something useless like that." Yusaku flat out objected.

"It's not useless! It has something to do with Hanoi!" Ai added persistently. Now that, caught Yusaku and Kusanagi's attention.

"What do you mean?" Yusaku asked, now fully interested in the topic.

"There are traces that Knights of Hanoi visiting the website many times." Ai knew full well that neither Yusaku nor Kusanagi are interested in finding DIVINE Attribute cards, but they won't ignore the rumor if Hanoi was involved. Hanoi going to the site was concerning, but this might lead him to Divine Ignis. If even Hanoi went to the website, there should be a bit of truth in that rumor.

"I know this could be a trap by Hanoi, but I think it's worth a shot! Don't you think so?" Ai hoped from the bottom of his heart that Yusaku and Kusanagi would take the bait. He didn't want to miss what most likely his only chance to find out about Divine Ignis' whereabouts. It would've been easier if he could talk about Divine Ignis, but unfortunately, Ai can't trust them yet with the information about Ignis.

"If Hanoi keeps sending people to that site, it's possible that DIVINE-Attribute cards does exist or there is something else that Hanoi wants to attain." Kusanagi said with contemplation. Yusaku also read the rumor board with newfound interest.

This reminded them of that time when they ventured the dungeon where they got the Cyberse Deck. People dismissed it as a prank,

but it was actually true and not a mere urban legend. After that experience, they won't think it's strange there is another place holding Cyberse cards, especially a place visited by Knights of Hanoi.

"Let's say there are DIVINE-Attribute cards or something else that Hanoi wants to get, we can't let them get ahold of it! If there are DIVINE Attribute or some other cards in there, they can be used as new weapons! We must take it first before Hanoi does!" Now that Yusaku and Kusanagi were paying attention, Ai just needed to give a little more push to convince them. No matter how small the possibility was, Yusaku and Kusanagi won't let Hanoi slide.

"Wait. Let's not be hasty. Before we go to the site, let's gather more information first. I have an acquaintance that perhaps can help us with this." Kusanagi suggested. What he said was reasonable, but the word 'acquaintance' that came out from him was a surprise to Ai.

"Acquaintance? I thought you're only working with Yusaku." Ai asked straightforwardly. Neither Yusaku nor Kusanagi had ever involved anybody else in their revenge against Hanoi. Why now Kusanagi decided to ask an outsider for help?

"Back when I just started hacking, he helped me quite a lot. He is a hacker with good reputation. I can vouch for him when it comes to investigation like this one." Kusanagi answered. It was from this person he got information about the Cyberse urban legend that led him and Yusaku to that dungeon where they got the Cyberse Deck to begin with.

"Then why not just ask him to find information about Hanoi?" Ai asked again. If Kusanagi knew someone so capable, why didn't he ask for this person's help from the start?

"There's no way I can do that. I don't want to involve him into my personal grudge against Hanoi." When Kusanagi learned of Hanoi and the Lost Incident, he made up his mind not to drag anyone else into something that he knew would be dangerous. Yusaku is an

exception because he was already doing his own investigation and another victim himself like his younger brother who wished to pursue the truth.

"And yet you're asking for his help now." Ai couldn't help but be confused by Kusanagi's contradiction.

"I only ask for information about the rumor, not Hanoi themselves. The information he provided is always accurate. Let's get some intel first and then we'll decide what to do about this website." Kusanagi explained.

Yusaku was never the type to depend on someone else to do some investigation. He did check on several forum discussions that he believed had information about Knights of Hanoi before he teamed up with Kusanagi, but they were mostly mere hearsay with little credibility. But since this time, it's Kusanagi himself who vouched for this acquaintance, Yusaku has no reason to doubt him. And it's not like they're asking for this acquaintance to investigate Hanoi directly or the sort, they're just going to ask for information about the website.

"I understand. Since you said so, I'll leave this to you, Kusanagi-san." Yusaku decided to trust his partner. And since Yusaku said so, Ai has no room to argue, and he was also eager to investigate the site already.

Having gained Yusaku's approval, Kusanagi starts typing and opens a website that leads him to a chatroom. Kusanagi logs into the chatroom with the same username he used when he first met Yusaku online, Unnamed.

Chatroom

ACADEMIA: Hey! Anybody here have info about Playmaker?

JUNKIE: Playmaker? Why? You want to meet him or something?

ACADEMIA: Not really.

ACADEMIA: Just wondering because there hasn't been any news about him lately.

KATTOBINGU: Hanoi has been quiet lately. Playmaker only appeared when Hanoi is involved, right? That makes Playmaker's sole purpose is to defeat Hanoi.

JUNKIE: Ah, I getcha. Without Hanoi around, he has no reason to log into LINK VRAINS.

ACADEMIA: Exactly.

TSURUGI: Hello, my dear clients.

TSURUGI: I know this is a chatroom, but I specifically made this chatroom for people who'd like to make a request to me.

TSURUGI: Make your request or go to a different chatroom to continue your discussion about Playmaker.

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: Now, now, cut them some slack, our dependable Mr. Sleuth. You know how beloved our Playmaker is.

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: And thanks to Playmaker, you can go back to business again.

TSURUGI: DADDY-LONG-LEGS. It's been a while. Do you have a request? Like getting information? Or maybe some help with your programming?

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: \(^W^)/

TSURUGI: Stop with the emoticon.

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: (TT_TT)

TSURUGI: That's it, I'm out of here.

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: Take a joke, won't you? (^u)

TSURUGI: Only when I feel like it. Right now? Nope.

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: (; _ ;)

ACADEMIA: Come on, man, don't make the girl cry.

5DS: Yeah, humor her for a bit.

KATTOBINGU: Do it! Do it!

JUNKIE: Better do it now before we spam you.

TSURUGI: :(

TSURUGI: There. Satisfied?

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: *(^w^)*

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: To the business, I'm looking for some intel.

TSURUGI: What kind of intel?

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: Have any of you heard about DIVINE Attribute?

UNNAMED: Actually, I'm also looking for information about that.

TSURUGI: UNNAMED!

TSURUGI: It's been a long time since you last visited this chat! Where have you been?

UNNAMED: Sorry. Real-life problems. It's nice to chat with you again, Tsurugi.

UNNAMED: Anyway, I heard a rumor there's an underground website that hides cards with DIVINE Attribute. Do you know

anything about it?

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: That's it! I'm thinking of trying to visit the site myself to check, but I don't want to go there blindly without knowing anything.

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: For that reason, I want to ask our Mr. Sleuth here if you know anything about it?

TSURUGI: You're not the first people who came to me to ask for this intel.

TSURUGI: I'm doing some digging myself and learned that the site takes the form of a labyrinth.

UNNAMED: Labyrinth?

TSURUGI: Yes. According to the testimonies of some people who had visited the site, when they entered the labyrinth and tried to find a way out, they were faced with a Duel Puzzle along the way.

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: Duel Puzzle?

TSURUGI: Solving the Duel Puzzle is essential to walk the right path to the exit. Furthermore, they only have one chance to answer the puzzle. Failed just once and they'll be forcefully logged out and their account destroyed for good.

KATTOBINGU: That sounds like that Cyberse urban legend a year ago.

ACADEMIA: You mean that dungeon containing Cyberse Deck? My friend who tried out that dungeon failed the puzzle and got forcefully logged out and must make a new account to get into LINK VRAINS.

JUNKIE: That dungeon turned out to be just a prank anyway, right?

TSURUGI: Yes, it was. But one of my witnesses said that they saw a Knight of Hanoi wandering around that site to check the labyrinth.

UNNAMED: If Hanoi even went out their way to check, maybe there's a truth in that rumor.

JUNKIE: But that also makes it dangerous. We're talking about Hanoi here.

JUNKIE: Better not involve yourself with that labyrinth then.

UNNAMED: Is there someone who has cleared that labyrinth?

TSURUGI: None so far. Nobody ever made it to the exit, so they don't know what is waiting at the end of the labyrinth.

TSURUGI: On that note, I'm planning to go to the labyrinth myself.

JUNKIE: Say what now?! Just when I warned you?!

KATTOBINGU: Wow, wow, are you for real?!

UNNAMED: Seriously?! You're going there?!

TSURUGI: It's part of my job that a client requested to me. I don't necessarily need to clear the labyrinth, just learning about the layout programming of the labyrinth is enough.

TSURUGI: Once I'm done, I'll log out immediately.

TSURUGI: UNNAMED, DADDY-LONG-LEGS, since the two of you are looking into the labyrinth, what do you say we go together?

TSURUGI: I'm not really a Duelist. I think I can answer Duel Puzzle, but there is always a possibility of somebody picking a fight.

TSURUGI: I'd like to ask you to be my bodyguard while I investigate the labyrinth.

TSURUGI: In return, I'll give you my service this time and next time pro bono. If by a chance we somehoe we cleared the labyrinth and got the reward, you two can have it. Not a bad offer, right?

DADDY-LONG-LEGS: Works for me!

TSURUGI: Let's meet up in an hour on site.

UNNAMED: My Dueling skill is subpar, but I am curious, so I'll go too.

TSURUGI: Great. Thank you. I'll see you later.

Cafe Nagi - Central Plaza - Den City

Kusanagi has reached an agreement with his informant Tsurugi and a fellow client, Daddy-Long-Legs. With that settled, they just need to do some preparation and wait for the promised time.

"Kusanagi-san, are you really planning to go to that site? Won't it be better if I'm the one going?" When Yusaku read what they were discussing in the chatroom, he wanted to object, but Kusanagi didn't listen to him and agreed to the offer. He knew that Kusanagi is the type who rarely logs into LINK VRAINS and more of the type who provides support offline, but if this labyrinth is as dangerous as the dungeon before, Kusanagi might get injured if suffered an attack online.

"No. I'll go. We can't let anyone know that Unnamed has a connection with Playmaker." Kusanagi was aware of the risk when he agreed to it, "We also don't know that perhaps there'll be traps inside the labyrinth. I can use this opportunity to scout the labyrinth to make sure you won't have to deal with traps and memorize the Duel Puzzle for you to solve later if it's necessary for you to go to the labyrinth directly."

"Let's say that DIVINE-Attribute cards are hidden in that labyrinth, there is also a possibility that this Daddy-Long-Legs can solve the puzzles and get the DIVINE-Attribute cards before us." Ai brought up the other client, who also aims for the treasure in the labyrinth (if

there really is any), not including Tsurugi since the guy himself already said he has no interest in it.

"At least it's better than Hanoi getting those cards." Kusanagi argued back.

"But then he might be targeted by Hanoi who wants those cards." Yusaku didn't back down so easily either.

"Then before that happens, Playmaker can challenge him to get those cards, adding another reason for Hanoi to come after us and reveal themselves." Kusanagi has already anticipated this argument. However, he wanted to do more to help Yusaku. After all the battles that Yusaku had fought, Kusanagi believed that taking action directly on the field himself once in a while is nothing compared to what Yusaku had done for them.

"If things get too dangerous, I'll leave immediately or call for your help. I promise I won't do anything reckless." Kusanagi was not taking no for an answer. He has made his decision and he would go regardless of whatever argument Yusaku (and Ai) will come up with.

Seeing the determined look in Kusanagi's eyes, Yusaku found it hard to say no. It's not like he didn't understand what Kusanagi felt. And he appreciated Kusanagi's desire to be of help. As long as he doesn't put himself in danger and avoid confrontation, he should be okay.

"I understand, Kusanagi-san. I'll trust you on this." Yusaku smiled defeatedly.

And, if it ever comes to the worst, he'll immediately go there to help Kusanagi.

Labyrinth - LINK VRAINS - One Hour Later

Kusanagi couldn't remember when exactly the last time he used this avatar or logging online like this. It has been a long time for sure. Arriving on the supposedly underground website, he was standing in front of the rumored labyrinth's entrance. There was a Greek letter carved on the entrance's gate. Just one look and Unnamed already has an ominous feeling about this labyrinth.

"Hello, Unnamed. Thank you for coming."

Unnamed turned around and faced the person he had not seen for a year.

Tsurugi.

His avatar took the form of a young man dresses up in a Shosei-styled uniform that consisted of a white Western shirt with a black kimono over top, a grey hakama, black shoes, blue ankle-height socks. His Duel Disk was the same older model as Yusaku's but purple lavender in color.

"It's been a long time, Tsurugi." Unnamed extended his hand to him, which the other accepted for a handshake.

"I sure missed you, Unnamed. You had me worried when you suddenly stopped coming to the chatroom." Tsurugi said, but as Unnamed said he was absent due to real-life problem, Tsurugi decided not to probe.

"Unnamed and Tsurugi, I presume?"

Unnamed and Tsurugi turned to the side from where the voice was calling for them came. When they faced the person who called them, Unnamed eyes widened as he recognized who it was. A tall young woman with fair skin. She has long gray hair with lavender bangs and pink eyes. She wears a black mask that covers the lower half of her face which is connected to her black short-sleeved undershirt. Her outfit is a one-piece that consisted of a black and dark violet vest

with a zipper and shorts with mauve lining, matching stockings and black and grey boots.

"Ghost Girl?!" Unnamed yelled out her name. This is truly unexpected. The true identity of the person with the username 'Daddy-Long-Legs' was none other than the treasure hunter Ghost Girl who had once lured Playmaker into a trap and provided them with the backdoor to SOL Technologies' databank.

"My, you've heard of me?" Ghost Girl appeared amused by Unnamed surprised reaction.

"You're quite infamous among hackers, so of course he must've heard of you, Ms. Daddy-Long-Legs." Tsurugi said with sarcastic tone when he referred to her by her chatroom username.

"Fufu, I am flattered. I hope you're not going to rat me out to everyone else in the chatroom. I love the surprise when they meet me directly like this." Ghost Girl winked teasingly as she said so.

"I'll give you my silence as a payment for you escorting me into the labyrinth. And if we somehow make it to the exit and found DIVINE-Attribute cards, the two of you can have those cards." Tsurugi has no interest in exposing anyone's identity. Besides, it's possible that the others in the chatroom already knew who she was but only decided not to talk about it.

"Are you sure you don't want that treasure?" Ghost Girl asked. She came because she's curious as a treasure hunter and if there really is a treasure there, it'll be a huge win for her. When it comes to a treasure, she preferred that she can keep it to herself and make a profit from it.

"The request I received is to investigate the data of the labyrinth, not getting the treasure from clearing it." Tsurugi repeated what he said in the chatroom.

"All the better for me then. Let's go." Ghost Girl pushed Tsurugi and Unnamed into the labyrinth ahead.

Entering the labyrinth, the light faded fast, like the end of the day in a wintry forest. Without it the walls felt all the colder and the smell of stagnant water dominated the senses. The walls, too thick to allow an arm through, let alone body, marched on either side. And to their feet, chilled long before the air or ground became so cold, came a sensation of dampness they hadn't noticed outside.

"This sure looks like one of those labyrinths appeared in the movies." Ghost Girl commented.

"At least there aren't any traps so far." Unnamed stated. Compared to the dungeon that he and Playmaker ventured a year ago, this labyrinth was more merciful for its challengers.

"Keep your eyes open and observe your surroundings. A place like this can give us a false sense of security, making us let our guards down, and then surprise us the moment when we felt completely safe." Tsurugi warned his two companions. He had experience of venturing to this sort of place and learned enough to always keep his guard up until the end. And he learned that the hard way.

Unnamed suddenly raised an arm, halting Tsurugi and Ghost Girl's step. In front of them, there is a statue in the shape of a Minotaur. The appearance of the Minotaur gave a familiar feeling to Tsurugi. And then it hit him.

"Whoever built this place, I bet they are a fan of Greek mythology." Tsurugi stated.

"What makes you think so?" Unnamed asked.

"In Greek myth, there is a labyrinth that houses a man-eating monster called Minotaur, which is the shape of the statue we are looking at right now." Tsurugi explained while pointing at the said statue, "In the myth, the people of Athens were at one point

compelled by King Minos of Crete to choose seven young men and seven young women to be offered as sacrificial victims to the Minotaur."

"That makes us the sacrifices then?" Ghost Girl understood she won't really die even if she got eaten here, but she didn't like the sound of it, and she would never want to put an end to her identity as Ghost Girl.

"Or we could be Theseus, the one who'll put an end to this Minotaur." Tsurugi added, trying to think on the positive side of things.

"Theseus? Who's that?" Unnamed asked, not familiar with the name.

"He is a divine hero in Greek myth who entered the labyrinth and slayed the Minotaur." Tsurugi answered. If this labyrinth was based on the Knossos labyrinth, the challengers could be playing the role of either the sacrifice or Theseus. His guess, should they lose, they'd be the Minotaur's food like the fourteen sacrifices in the myth. But should they win, that would make them Theseus, the hero who put an end to the Minotaur's terror.

Just as Tsurugi said so, the statue suddenly moves, raising its right hand and throws a chain that binds Tsurugi's Duel Disk.

"W-what?!" It happened so fast that Tsurugi couldn't even react.

[DUEL PUZZLE START]

A notification appeared out of thin air.

"Oh my, looks like it has chosen you as the first challenger for this Duel Puzzle. No worries, if you ever failed, one of us we'll be sure to take over." Ghost Girl said with a not-so-sympathetic tone.

"Right. Thank you for your encouragement." Tsurugi said flatly without having to look at the treasure hunter.

The platforms of the Duel Puzzle then appeared along with the LPs for both players. The puzzle was following the old Duel rule long before the creation of Link Summoning, so the field only consisted of Monster Zone and Spell & Trap Zone.

Tsurugi LP: 300

Minotaur LP: 24800

"Hold on, that's a rather huge difference of LPs. That's going overboard, don't you think?" Ghost Girl objected to the difference between the Minotaur and Tsurugi's LPs.

Unnamed silently nodded in agreement. When he and Unknown ventured to the dungeon where they found the Cyberse Deck, they were presented with Duel Puzzle with similar difference between the LPs of the challenger and the dungeon's protector. But this? This is on a whole level of difference.

The Duel platforms then show the cards on both players' fields.

The opponent only has two face-up cards in his Spell and Trap Zone and nothing in Monster Zone. The trap cards are Trap Card Curse of Darkness that has the effect that each time a Spell Card is activated, immediately after it resolves, the player that activated it takes 1000 damage, and Trap Card Gravity Bind that prevents Level 4 and higher monsters from attacking.

On Tsurugi's side, the cards in his hand consisted of:

Magic Card Emergency Teleport. It has the effect of Special Summoning 1 Level 3 or lower Psychic-Type monster from your hand or Deck. During the End Phase this turn, remove from play that monster.

Gale Dogra (Insect/Effect/Earth/ATK: 650/DEF: 600/LV: 2). It has an effect that allows him to pay 3000 LP to send 1 monster from his Extra Deck to the GY.

Magic Card Burial from a Different Dimension. He can target up to 3 banished monsters to return them to the Graveyard.

Magic Card Instant Fusion. The card allows him to pay 1000 LP to Special Summon 1 Level 5 or lower Fusion Monster from his Extra Deck, but it cannot attack, also it is destroyed during the End Phase. (This is treated as a Fusion Summon.) He can only activate 1 Instant Fusion per turn.

Magic Card Pot of Benevolence. He can target 2 cards in both players' Graveyards to shuffle them into the Decks. After activation, this card is banished instead of being sent to the GY. He can only activate 1 Pot of Benevolence per turn.

The cards available from his Deck are:

Tuner Monster Psychic Commander (PSYCHIC/TUNER/EARTH/ATK: 1400/DEF: 800). It has the effect of when a Psychic-Type monster he controls battles, during the Damage Step he can pay Life Points in multiples of 100 (max. 500) to have the monster it's battling lose that much ATK and DEF, until the End Phase.

The cards that were already on his field consisted of:

General Grunard of the Ice Barrier (Water/Warrior/Effect/ATK: 2800/DEF: 1000/LV: 8) that is placed face-up in the Monster Zone in Attack Position. Its effect is that during his Main Phase, he can Normal Summon 1 Ice Barrier monster in addition to his Normal Summon/Set. He can only gain this effect once per turn.

Face-down Magic Card Soul of the Pure that can increase his LP by 800.

Face-down Trap Card Aegis of Gaia that allows him to gain 3000 LP, but if this face-up card is removed from the field, he'll take 3000 damage.

Face-down Magic Card Miracle Synchro Fusion. He can Fusion Summon 1 Fusion Monster from his Extra Deck that lists a Synchro Monster as material, by banishing Fusion Materials listed on it from his field or GY. If this Set card is destroyed by his opponent's card effect and sent to your GY, he can Draw 1 card.

The monsters that he can Special Summon from his Extra Deck consisted of:

A Fusion Monster Flower Wolf (BEAST/FUSION/EARTH/ATK: 1800/DEF: 1400/LV: 5) that doesn't have any Monster Effect.

Another Fusion Monster Dragon Knight Draco-Equiste (Dragon/Effect/Wind/Fusion/ATK: 3200/DEF: 2000/LV:10). This monster can only be Special Summoned by Fusion Summon from the Extra Deck. Once per turn, he can select 1 Dragon Synchro Monster in the GY; banish that target, and if he does, until the End Phase, this card's name becomes that monsters, and replace this effect with that monster's original effects. While this card is in Attack Position, his opponent takes any effect damage he would have taken from their card effects, instead.

Synchro Monster Shooting Star Dragon (Dragon/Effect/Synchro/Wind/ATK: 3300/DEF: 2500/LV: 10). With this monster's effect, once per turn, he can excavate the top 5 cards of his Deck, shuffle them back in, also this card's maximum number of attacks per Battle Phase this turn equals the number of Tuner monsters excavated. Once per turn, when a card or effect is activated that would destroy a card(s) on the field (Quick Effect), he can negate the effect, and if he does, destroy it. Once per turn, when an opponent's monster declares an attack, he can target the attacking monster; banish this card, and if he does, negate that attack. During the next End Phase, he can Special Summon this card banished by this effect.

Last but not the least, there are banished monsters that consisted of:

2 Scrap Beast (Beast/Tuner/Earth/Effect/ATK: 1600/DEF: 1300/LV: 4). Both have the effect in which if this face-up Defense Position card is targeted for an attack, at the end of the Battle Phase, he can destroy this card. If this card is destroyed by the effect of a Scrap card and sent to the Graveyard, he can target 1 Scrap monster in his Graveyard, except Scrap Beast; add that target to his hand.

Scrap Goblin (Beast-Warrior/Tuner/Effect/ATK: 0/DEF: 500/LV: 3/Earth). This card cannot be destroyed by battle. If this face-up Defense Position card is selected as an attack target, he can destroy this card at the end of the Battle Phase. If this card is destroyed by the effect of a Scrap card and sent to the Graveyard, he can select 1 Scrap monster in his Graveyard, except Scrap Goblin and add it to his hand.

Not long after Tsurugi studied the entire field and the cards, another notification appeared in thin air.

[You have 30 seconds to decide your first move]

"What?! Only 30 seconds?!" Unnamed looks at the countdown notification in disbelief.

"That's too short!" Ghost Girl also shared the same reaction. A normal Duel is one thing, but to solve a puzzle like this? 30 seconds won't be enough for them.

However, to both Unnamed and Ghost Girl's shock, Tsurugi didn't falter. In fact, he looked determined and began his move.

"I activate Trap Card: Aegis of Gaia! I gain 3000 LP, but when this card is removed from the field, I'll take 3000 damage!" Tsurugi opened one of his face-down cards, activating the Trap Card.

Tsurugi LP: 300 = 3300

"And then, I summon Gale Dogra from my hand!" Tsurugi summoned Gale Dogra in Attack Position to the Monster Zone.

The countdown notification disappeared then. The Minotaur also disappeared shortly after along with the Duel platforms.

"Huh? That's it? We haven't even solved the puzzle yet." Ghost Girl blinked in confusion as she looked at the spot where the Minotaur and Duel Puzzle disappeared.

"The notification said to 'make your first move'. Maybe it means this is still just the first stage of the Duel Puzzle. As we proceed the labyrinth, we'll encounter the Minotaur again and then challenged to make the second move." Unnamed deduced.

Rather than being challenged by multiple different Duel Puzzles as they walk further into the labyrinth, they were presented with a single Duel Puzzle that must be solved for each move progressively until they reach the end of the labyrinth.

"Since nothing happened, I think I made the right move." Tsurugi said but he couldn't feel relieved just yet.

"In that case, before we proceed to the next stage, let's study the Duel Puzzle just now and then think of what to-" Ghost Girl's suggestion was interrupted when they heard a crumbling sound not far behind them.

Looking back, to their horror, the ground behind them started to collapse at a fast rate.

"RUN!" Tsurugi yelled out.

The three adventurers ran as fast as they could from the collapsing ground. As they ran, there were arrows appearing out of nowhere pointing to a certain direction when the path split. Not being given the chance to think things through, they all just followed the arrows until they were finally face-to-face with the Minotaur statue again and the ground stopped crumbling.

"Why did the ground suddenly collapse like that?!" Unnamed questioned while trying to catch up his breath, looking back at the crumbled ground that didn't show the bottom of it when he looked down to check the depth. It's like a bottomless pit.

"Did you make the wrong move?" Ghost Girl looked at Tsurugi in wonder. Tsurugi made his move without discussing with them, and considering the sudden time limit, she couldn't blame him for panicking and instinctively made his move without thinking.

"No. I get it now. Whoever built this labyrinth made it so that we would only be given a limited time to think up each of our moves. When we make the right move, the ground will collapse to force us to proceed with the labyrinth and start the next stage immediately. The longer we stay still, the faster the collapsing ground catching up to us." Tsurugi didn't know whether to be impressed or terrified by the labyrinth's creator to come up with this… difficult challenge. No, even difficult was too kind of a word to describe it.

"We're only given 30 seconds to think up the next move otherwise we'll fall into the pit, being forcefully logged out and have our accounts permanently destroyed." Ghost Girl recalled the time limit given to them. And judging by what happened earlier, the labyrinth has deemed them as one group, making Tsurugi their representative, meaning that Tsurugi's loss would mean hers and Unnamed's loss as well. Neither of them could take Tsurugi's place should he fail because they'll fail too.

"And the same fate awaits us if we failed to make the correct move within those 30 seconds. This labyrinth is really testing our abilities in understanding both player's cards, and deciding a counter strategy based on both players' cards and fields within a short time." Unnamed retracted his words about this labyrinth being more merciful than the dungeon he and Unknown cleared before. This labyrinth is far more ruthless to its challenger, requiring them to be quick in decision making while still capable of making a clear judgment.

"The ground collapses quicker the longer we're staying still on the same spot. No wonder there's no one that has cleared this labyrinth yet. Only an exceptionally skilled Duelist can clear this puzzle in a short time." Ghost Girl started to feel a headache catching to her. She's by no means a weak Duelist, but even she must admit that this was beyond her skill.

"That's not even the worst of it yet." Tsurugi looks at his Duel Disk with a frown marring his face. "I had a bad feeling since we entered the labyrinth, so after we cleared the first stage, while running for our lvies, I've been trying to log out. But…"

Unnamed gasped as if he realized something. He checks on his Duel Disk too, followed by Ghost Girl, and their face frowned as realization hit them like a cold ocean wave.

"We can't log out." Unnamed said dejectedly in his tone. He also noticed that he couldn't contact Yusaku or Ai. The communication to the outside world has also been jammed. They were completely trapped inside the labyrinth. The dungeon he did before was a child's play compared to this labyrinth.

It's either they cleared the labyrinth, or they're doomed.

"Looks like we have no choice but to proceed…" Tsurugi stated, facing the Minotaur again.

"Wait, shouldn't we think together about the Duel Puzzle?" Ghost Girl held back Tsurugi's arm before he approached the Minotaur.

"It's okay. I got this. I'm not a Duelist, but that doesn't mean I can't Duel. I think I can solve this puzzle." Tsurugi said with assuring tone as he let go of Ghost Girl's hand from his arm.

His Duel Disk lit up, and then the Duel platforms appeared again, showing the same field as before when he did his first move. And again, the countdown notification appeared.

[Decide your second move in 30 seconds]

"I activate Gale Dogra's effect! By paying 3000 LP, I can send a card from my Extra Deck to the Graveyard!" Tsurugi chose to send Shooting Star Dragon from his Extra Deck to the Graveyard.

Tsurugi LP: 3300 = 300

"So that's it. Tsurugi used Aegis of Gaia's effect so he can activate Gale Dogra's effect to send Shooting Star Dragon from his Extra Deck." Ghost Girl understood now why Tsurugi decided to activate the Trap Card despite the risk that might come to him if the card leaves the field.

"But what would he do by sending Shooting Star Dragon to the Graveyard?" Unnamed wondered.

Ghost Girl recalled all the cards presented to Tsurugi that she could remember when they were shown during the first stage. If she remembered it right, one of the cards in Tsurugi's hand was…

"If I'm right, his next card would be that card." Ghost Girl observed Tsurugi closely, having a good guess of what he would do next.

"And from my hand, I activate Magic Card: Miracle Synchro Fusion! I remove from play General Grunard of the Ice Barrier on my field and Shooting Star Dragon from my Graveyard to perform Fusion Summon!" Tsurugi banished the two said monsters, Fusion Summoning Dragon Knight Draco-Equiste in Attack Position to the Monster Zone.

Minotaur LP: 24800 = 23800

"Oh! Due to Draco-Equiste's effect, the Minotaur will take any damage that Tsurugi would have taken from the effect of Curse of Darkness each time he activates a Spell Card!" Unnamed couldn't help but be impressed that Tsurugi managed to come up with that move on his own within a short time.

Just as Tsurugi readied to continue, once again, the Minotaur and platform disappeared. Behind them, the ground began to crumble, forcing them to run away for the second time.

"Are you sure you're not a Duelist, Tsurugi? I think you did quite well." Unnamed asked the younger man while running.

"Let's just say I've seen my friends Dueling a lot and learned from them." Tsurugi replied. He was surprised that he could answer while running like this as if they were not in danger.

"I hope that you already know what cards to use on the next stage." Ghost Girl said.

Tsurugi didn't get to answer as the Minotaur statue appeared in their view again. They made a jump, entering the next stage before the ground beneath them collapsed completely.

"This is more than I bargained for…" Ghost Girl sighed. If she had known it would be this difficult, she would've brought more of her emergency programs that could've gotten her out of this.

"You can say that again…" Unnamed could imagine how worried Yusaku and Ai were by now. Since the communications were jammed, they couldn't see what he was doing inside now. He hoped Yusaku wouldn't do something like going inside the labyrinth to follow him.

"All the more reason for us to clear this labyrinth quickly." Once this was over, Tsurugi decided not to accept this kind of job for a while. This is not good for his mind in the long run.

The second Tsurugi stood up, his Duel Disk lit up, summoning the Duel platform that continues the previous stage.

However, to their dismay, the countdown notification that appeared this time showed a different number from before.

[Decide your third move in 20 seconds]

" *Sweet heavens above, why…?!"* Tsurugi felt like crying in his mind due to the raise in difficulty. 30 seconds was already bad enough and now it became worse.

"The countdown became shorter!" Ghost Girl didn't want to admit it, but it's getting harder to keep calm under this dire situation. And she must depend on Tsurugi alone to get her out of this labyrinth.

Tsurugi didn't need to turn around to know that Ghost Girl and Unnamed were staring at him. He could sense their gaze on his back. It would've been easier if they could replace him should he fail. At least, then, they will still be given the chance to survive.

" *This is my fault…"* Tsurugi thought. This happened because he proposed to Unnamed and Ghost Girl to come with him. If he had gone alone, at the very least he would be the only one to go down if he failed. But he dragged them into this. Now, there's only one choice for him. *"I mustn't fail. I must win and get them out of this place!"*

"Tsurugi, can you do this?!" Unnamed looked at the said person who was already facing the Minotaur while taking one of the cards he picked from his hand.

"Yes… Don't worry, I'll get us out of here." Tsurugi replied.

"I activate Magic Card: Burial from a Different Dimension!" Tsurugi selected Scrap Goblin, Scrap Beast, and Shooting Star Dragon that he removed from play previously back to his Graveyard.

Minotaur LP: 23800 = 22800

"I activate Magic Card: Pot of Benevolence!" He continued, selecting Scrap Goblin and Scrap Beast in his Graveyard and then shuffled them back to his Deck. Once the card fulfilled its purpose, the Spell Card was removed from play.

Minotaur LP: 22800= 21800

"I activate the effect of Dragon Knight Draco-Equiste! I can target 1 Dragon Synchro Monster in the Graveyard to banish it, and then, until End Phase, this card's name becomes that monster's and replace its effect with that monster's effect!"Tsurugi banished Shooting Star Dragon in his Graveyard, changing Draco-Equiste's name and effect to that of Shooting Star Dragon.

"I activate Magic Card: Soul of the Pure!" Tsurugi increased his LP by 800.

Tsurugi LP: 300 = 1100

Minotaur LP: 21800 = 20800

Looking closer, Unnamed noticed that Tsurugi's hand was trembling. His whole body was. Unnamed realized in that moment that Tsurugi was not as calm as he looked. He was forcing himself to act like nothing was bothering him. Of course, it's normal to be nervous under these circumstances. What's more, Tsurugi must be under pressure of helping not only himself, but also Unnamed and Ghost Girl. He's carrying their lives on his shoulder as he became their representative to solve this Duel Puzzle. If he failed, then all three of them would lose their accounts. It's not easy to Duel while having to endure such big pressure.

" *And if he is still the same Tsurugi that I knew before, he most likely feels guilty for hiring us as his bodyguard."* Unnamed correctly assumed.

The platform and Minotaur disappeared once Tsurugi's LP increased, starting the ground to collapse again, forcing Tsurugi, Unnamed, and Ghost Girl to run again for the third time. However, Tsurugi felt his strength started to leave his body. All the pressure he was enduring felt weighing him down. It was like being hit by a huge rock. This was not missed by both Unnamed and Ghost Girl, seeing that their

employer's speed had slowed down to the point he was running behind them with the crumbling starting to catch up.

2 minutes running and they soon saw the next stage, just a bit more to reach the Minotaur. However, it was then that Tsurugi's legs seemingly have given up. Just a few more steps he would reach the next stage, but the crumbling ground caught up to him. His body fell as his footing were gone, Unnamed and Ghost Girl's panicked faces got farther away.

" *No-!"*

"Tsurugi!"

Tsurugi gasped as Unnamed caught him by his right arm with both hands. The ground stopped crumbling right at the spot Unnamed and Ghost Girl were right now. Unnamed struggled to pull him up, prompting Ghost Girl to help as well to pull up Tsurugi from the ravine. All three of them sighed in relief at the close call. Had Tsurugi fallen, Unnamed and Ghost Girl would've been at the mercy of the hungry Minotaur.

"Thank you, Unnamed, Ghost Girl. And I'm sorry." Tsurugi told them both gratefully and apologetically.

"I'll have to charge you extra for this." Ghost Girl said with a low chuckle.

"I'll give you my word, Ghost Girl." Tsurugi didn't mind.

"Tsurugi, don't think about us and just focus on solving the puzzle." Unnamed told Tsurugi, pointing his thumb at the Minotaur, "Don't worry about anything unnecessary. If you want to solve this puzzle, then focus on the task at hand. That would save us all. I know you can do it."

"Unnamed…" Tsurugi stared hard at Unnamed. He must've done a terrible job at hiding his uneasiness. But even though he dragged

him into this situation, Unnamed held him no ill will and instead placed his trust in solving the puzzle.

"You've brought us this far. I don't think you'll disappoint us in the end. You're a better Duelist than you believe you are, Mr. Sleuth." Ghost Girl winked at Tsurugi. Unlike the usual teasing wink that she usually gave, it was a genuine encouragement.

Tsurugi could breathe better now. He appreciated that even though they were far from being friends, Unnamed and Ghost Girl still decided to trust him and wouldn't hold a grudge against him even if they were to fall. Not that he has any intention of failing. Not when they were so close.

[Decide your last move in 10 seconds]

"So, they make it even more difficult for the last stage." Ghost Girl was a bit annoyed by another raise in difficulty.

"But I don't think we need to worry anymore." Unnamed couldn't explain it, but his gut feeling told him that Tsurugi could pull this through. There was nothing to worry about. And judging from Tsurugi's determined eyes, Unnamed has no room to doubt him.

"I activate the new effect of Dragon Knight Draco-Equiste!" Tsurugi revealed the top 5 cards of his own Deck. Since all 5 cards in his Deck are Tuner monsters, this will allow Draco-Equiste to attack 5 times this turn.

"I activate Instant Fusion! By paying 1000 LP, I can Special Summon Fusion Monster from my Extra Deck!" Tsurugi Fusion Summoned Flower Wolf to the Monster Zone in Attack Position.

Tsurugi LP: 1100 = 100

Minotaur LP: 20800 = 19800

"I activate Magic Card: Emergency Teleport!" Tsurugi Special Summoned Psychic Commander from his Deck to the Monster Zone in Attack Position.

Minotaur LP: 19800 = 18800

"I tune Flower Wolf with Psychic Commander!" Tsurugi Synchro Summoned Scrap Dragon to the Monster Zone in Attack Position.

"I activate Scrap Dragon's effect! Once per turn, I can target 1 card I control and 1 card my opponent controls and destroy them!" Tsurugi chose to destroy his own Gale Dogra and the Minotaur's Gravity Bind.

"He did it! He destroyed Gravity Bind!" Unnamed cheered at the destruction of the troublesome Continuous Trap Card.

"Now that Gravity Bind is destroyed, Tsurugi can use his monster to attack." It was not finished yet, but Ghost Girl started to feel relieved already.

"And thanks to the effect that Draco-Equiste copied from Shooting Star Dragon earlier, he can attack five times with it and then with Scrap Dragon." Unnamed could see the path of victory in front of them. With Draco-Equiste's ATK at 3200, if it attacks five times, the damage that the Minotaur would take would be 16000 in total. And then combined with Scrap Dragon's ATK at 2800, the total damage that Minotaur received would be exactly 18800.

"Battle! I attack directly with Draco-Equiste!" Tsurugi declared his last move, his Battle Phase.

Draco-Equiste pierced the Minotaur with its spear, causing its body to crack.

Minotaur LP: 18800 = 2800

"Lastly, I attack with Scrap Dragon!" Tsurugi declared his final attack.

Scrap Dragon opened its mouth as steam came out from the two pipes on its body. Its eyes glowed red, unleashing deep burning red flames straight towards the Minotaur, burning out its remaining LP.

Minotaur LP: 2800 = 0

"Alright! He did it!" Unnamed cheered, while Ghost Girl could finally feel relaxed as they had passed the danger.

[CONGRATULATIONS]

Just as the Minotaur's statue crumbled into pieces, a new notification appeared.

[YOU HAVE CLEARED THE LABYRINTH]

Their surroundings changed into an ancient Greek altar with a rich figural frieze. It appeared to be built in Pentelic marble with a blue Eleusinian limestone frieze. It was so beautiful, far different from the bleak, depressing air of the labyrinth they were in just a moment ago. Tsurugi couldn't help but stare at the whole room in awe.

[YOU SHALL RECEIVE YOUR REWARD]

From the pieces of the destroyed Minotaur statue, an orb of light shot up above, and then it went down straight towards Tsurugi, enveloping him in a bright sphere of white light. Tsurugi closed his eyes from the blinding light. He struggled to open his eyes again and saw a big and tall silhouette. He couldn't make it out because of the brightness, but realized his Duel Disk was giving off a reaction. Suddenly, his head became light-headed, and his body slackened. By the time the light dissipated, Tsurugi was already lying unconscious on the ground.

"Tsurugi! Hey! Tsurugi! Are you okay?!" Unnamed brought Tsurugi into his arms, shaking his body to get him to wake up.

Not done with that, the whole labyrinth was shaking. The walls, the grounds, and everything else started to crack. Unnamed got a sense of DeJa'Vu from this. It was like this too when Unknown cleared the Duel Puzzle in the dungeon last year. As the labyrinth has been cleared, it has lost its purpose and is set to disappear.

"We still can't log out! Looks like we have to get out of here first if we want to!" Unnamed couldn't get his Duel Disk to function and his communication still jammed. They must find a way out and fast.

"Then let's go!" Ghost Girl looking up above.

Ghost Girl pointed at the big gap between the cracks of the ceiling. She held Unnamed by his arm while Unnamed was still holding the unconscious Tsurugi and then shot rope-like energy from a device around her wrist that acted as a grappling hook to take her, Unnamed, and Tsurugi from the crumbling labyrinth. The moment they finally got out; they summoned their respective D-Boards to go as far away as possible from the labyrinth that was now falling apart.

They landed quite far but still near enough to see the remains of what used to be the labyrinth.

"It seems, the labyrinth ends up as nothing more than a prank. So much for treasure hunting." Ghost Girl was disappointed that in the end, she didn't get anything worthwile from the labyrinth after having her life being put on the line like that. If there was one good thing coming from this, Tsurugi would pay her for saving his life when he almost fell into the bottomless ravine.

"At least I did my job as an escort. I'll be leaving first. Take care of our employer, Unnamed." Ghost Girl logged out, leaving Unnamed along with Tsurugi.

A few seconds after Ghost Girl logged out, Tsurugi stirred, slowly opening his eyes.

"Unnamed…? Where are we?" Tsurugi looked around, not seeing the labyrinth anymore.

"The labyrinth was crumbling when you got engulfed in that bright light and passed out. Ghost Girl and me had to take you out before we got buried." Unnamed pointed at the direction where the labyrinth used to stand, now nothing more but rubble.

"Where is Ghost Girl?" Tsurugi asked as he didn't see the treasure hunter.

"She logged out after we got out of the labyrinth. Since there was nothing at the end of the labyrinth, she concluded the labyrinth was just a prank and didn't see any reason to stick around any longer." Unnamed answered. While he was also disappointed that he didn't get any information about Hanoi, for now, he was just glad he made it out in one piece.

"Too bad then. She didn't get the reward she wanted." Tsurugi raised his Duel Disk, taking out a single card from it.

"Wait, so there really is a reward?! It's not a prank?!" Unnamed looked surprised at the card Tsurugi was holding.

"Yeah. It's not a DIVINE-Attribute card like in the rumor, but it's a Cyberse-Type like the ones Playmaker has." Tsurugi revealed while looking at the card.

"A Cyberse Monster?!" Unnamed took back his disappointment he felt just a second ago. It was the right decision to investigate the labyrinth. If they hadn't cleared it, the Hanoi might've cleared it first and got the Cyberse card. Even if it's just one card, there's no way Unnamed would let Hanoi gain more weapon to their disposal.

"Here, take it." Tsurugi offered the card to Unnamed. Just one look at Unnamed's expression, it was obvious that the guy wanted the card so badly. Cyberse-Type was not a card that can be found anywhere,

a rare card, so it's not weird if any Duelist or card collector would want one.

"You're giving this to me…?!" Unnamed looked at Tsurugi as if he was not in his right mind.

"Ghost Girl already left, and I already told you I have no interest in this card. I already fulfilled my job. That's enough for me. Besides, you saved me back in there, Unnamed. Take this as a token of my gratitude and my payment for hiring you." Tsurugi pushed the card into Unnamed's right palm, closing it with Unnamed's left hand. He smiled at the older man, expressing his sincerity.

"Thank you, Tsurugi." Unnamed wholeheartedly accepted the card.

"No. Thank you, Unnamed." Tsurugi replied.

"But… I don't get it. From what I saw in there, you're so good at Dueling. Why didn't you become a Duelist?" Unnamed asked. That Duel Puzzle was not something that could be solved by someone with amateurish or average skill. Even a skilled Duelist would still have a problem with it. But Tsurugi managed to solve it all on his own within a short time.

"… I… don't enjoy Dueling… it always brings up a bad memory…" Tsurugi said no more than that. And Unnamed knew that he mustn't probe further. Not with Tsurugi making a sad expression. They were not close enough to share their own private information. This is the time Unnamed should know his place and not step out of the line.

"We better go back now. Our job is done here." Unnamed ended the conversation at that. It was about time for him to return anyway. Yusaku must be waiting sick for him.

"Yeah. I must report to my client." Tsurugi stood up. He couldn't wait to return and take a rest on top of his soft fluffy bed in his room.

Before Unnamed pressed the log out option, Tsurugi called him again.

"If you need my help again, feel free to chat me, Unnamed." The younger man said.

Unnamed didn't say anything but gave him a nod as a promise that they'll meet again.

He then logged out.

Cafe Nagi - Den City - Real World

Kusanagi came out from the room. The moment he came out, he fell on his knees due to exhaustion. All those energies he had had been used up from all the running in the labyrinth.

"Kusanagi-san, are you okay?!" Yusaku worriedly helped Kusanagi to sit up on the chair while checking if he suffered any damage.

"I'm fine. Just a little tired." Kusanagi assured Yusaku, bringing some relief to the young man.

Kusanagi then told them everything that happened in the labyrinth, from his meeting with Tsurugi and Ghost Girl, how Tsurugi was chosen to represent them to solve the puzzle, how they had to run for their lives from falling into ravine that would've destroyed their accounts, and finally how he managed to get out from the terrifying labyrinth.

"So, in the end there were no DIVINE-Attribute cards in that labyrinth…" Ai looked downcast after hearing the story. In the end, it was just one of those rumors.

"At least the labyrinth was cleared not for nothing, I got a new Cyberse Monster for you." Kusanagi showed the Cyberse card he got from Tsurugi, showing it ont he computer screen.

"Accesscode Talker…" Yusaku uttered as he stared at the card.

"It's the same Archetype as the Code Talker monsters that you have." Ai commented.

"But this card has some-sort of lock program. We can't use it unless we break the lock." Kusanagi revealed while checking the card's data. "This is a good card. It'd be a waste if it's not used. It'll be a good weapon against Hanoi."

"Then, we'll need to break the lock program as soon as possible." Yusaku immediately helped Kusanagi to try breaking the lock on the card.

While Yusaku and Kusanagi were busy breaking the lock, Ai continued to stare at Accesscode Talker. Looking at the lock program in the card, he found the trace of programming typically used by Divine Ignis. And based on Kusanagi's description about the labyrinth, there was no doubt about it. The labyrinth was indeed created by Divine Ignis. Ai stared at Accesscode Talker concernedly, wondering about his best friend.

" *Did you create that labyrinth and hid this card for me to find… Divine Ignis…?"*

Room - Den City

A young man with short unkempt black hair with white highlights and a pair of lavender-colored eyes was lying comfortably on a bed with sky blue-colored sheet. He didn't lay down for long though, because he knew his manner. This wasn't bedroom, he only borrowed this room for a bit because he had a job to do. Now that the job was over, he decided to take a brief break on the bed for a few minutes before he sat up again and tidied up the bed.

He finished cleaning just as someone knocked twice on the door.

"Kento. Are you busy now?" The owner of the voice from the other side of the door asked.

The young man, Kento, walked up and opened the door to show that he wasn't busy. The person on the other side of the door was a girl his age. She has long black hair reaching past her back that she tied in a ponytail, and a pair of violet eyes. She came in and was surprised to see the room was clean.

"Did you do this? You tidy up my room?" The girl asked.

"Of course, I am. No way I can just let it in disarray when it's not my room to begin with. And it's a girl's room." Kento said. It would be impolite and irresponsible of him to leave a girl's room in a mess after asking to borrow it.

"You came right on time, Kazue. I just finished with your request to investigate the labyrinth." Kento sat on the cushion on the carpet, beckoning the girl, Kazue, to sit next to him so he could give her his report.

"That's quicker than I thought." Kazue was confident with Kento's ability, but she thought it would take more time for his investigation considering how notorious that labyrinth was.

"Not just investigated it, I even cleared it."

"You did?! Then, how is it?!"

Kento then began to explain in detail about what happened during his adventure in the labyrinth. How he was forced to be the representative to solve the Duel Puzzle and managed to solve it at a close call. From his analysis of the data he gathered from the labyrinth, the creator was a skilled programmer. The whole labyrinth was made with high-quality data that can't be found just anywhere. He could only describe the creator of the labyrinth as a genius programmer. Hearing his story, Kazue's face frowned with concern. She asked him to investigate the labyrinth because she thought he

looked bored lately. She never thought that he'd be forced to Duel, albeit in the form of a puzzle. And it still didn't change the fact that he got dragged into danger.

"I'm sorry…" Kazue apologized.

"It's not your fault. I was at fault for not double checking my intel. And hey, it's not for nothing. I got to gather interesting data from the labyrinth." Kento tried to cheer her up, giving him a pat on the head, though Kazue still felt guilty.

Her attention shifted from him to her computer when she heard noises usually came out when there was a message notification. Seeing the screen of the computer, she recognized the chatroom shown on the screen. It was a chatroom made by none other than her friend here.

"Your chatroom is making lots of noises there." Kazue commented.

"Both the benefits and detriment of being a skilled programmer. My chatroom is filled with requests since this morning." Kento said with a sigh and then logged out from his chatroom, stopping the notification noises.

"As popular as always. However, please do not forget you still have the work that my father asked you to do." Kazue reminded.

"The work I got from your father is always my first priority over those requests. He is my best client after all." Kento smiled teasingly, which Kazue replied with a giggle.

"By the way, while you are at Den City, how about you take a look at your new house later? You'll be moving soon to this city after all." She suggested. Kento came to play to her house only because it was weekend. On the weekdays, he must returned to his home in Tokyo. However, his family decided to move to Den City soon.

"No need. It's still in the middle of renovation and I already saw it from the pictures." Kento declined. Besides, it'll feel more like a new house if he sees it directly for the first time on the same day he moves.

"Are you sure you want to wait for 3 months until you can see your new house?" Kazue asked again, as if urging him to go.

"You know that I am a patient person, dear childhood friend of mine." Kento poked her forehead playfully and then changed the subject, "Enough about me, I thought you'd ask me where your boyfriend is."

"He already texted me that he can't go because he already has another plan." Kazue showed the message that her boyfriend sent to her a while ago.

"Too bad. You're looking forward to having another date with him, aren't you?" Kento said with the intent of teasing her, hoping to make her a blushing mess, but alas, his childhood friend was not like ordinary school girls when they were having a crush. No, his childhood friend was too mature for that.

"Yes, I am, but most importantly, I invited you today because I thought the three of us could hang out again together. You know because of what happened with Hanoi, I was too busy helping my father that I hardly had any time to spend with the both of you." Kazue replied without showing any sign of embarrassment from Kento's teasing. As much as she wanted to spend more private times with her boyfriend, she also loved it when she hung out with both her boyfriend and her childhood friend. Spending time with them was always the most fun time she had.

"Once I moved to Den City, we can meet every day. That's one problem solved. Now, just focus on how to arrange more dates with your boyfriend since unlike me, your boyfriend is not moving anytime soon from Tokyo." He and Kazue's boyfriend attended the same school in Tokyo. Usually, they'd go visit Kazue together during

weekends or holidays, but unfrotunately, he couldn't come today because of a family matter.

"My boyfriend is also your best friend. You should also arrange some time with him so the two of you can still have your guys' hang out even after you moved." Kazue retorted. Her boyfriend and Kento were the best of friends, like brothers even. Just as her boyfriend enjoyed to spend time with her, he also enjoyed the time he spent with Kento. Once Kento moved to and lived in Den City as well, her boyfriend would be left by himself in Tokyo, only able to meet during weekends and holidays.

"We'll figure out a way." Kento decided to drop the subject and turned on the TV.

He randomly changed the TV channels until a news channel caught his attention. It showed LINK VRAINS live. As usual, there were lots of people having fun Dueling. What's unusual, the bright sunny sky of LINK VRAINS suddenly darkened. When people looked up at the sky to see what's going on, the sun slowly turned black. Something was slowly covering the sun.

"An eclipse in LINK VRAINS?" Kento watched curiously at the news as it showed the supposed eclipse.

"It doesn't look like it's an event held by SOL Technologies." Kazue also watched the news intently.

If even Kazue didn't know, then it's not an event held by SOL Technologies. If there's an event, SOL Technologies would have made an official announcement for everyone to know. And since Kazue's father's company has a connection with SOL Technologies, she would know faster than anyone if SOL Technologies was going to do an event. Since she didn't know, the news mentioned that no official statement was made, and the recent cases involving certain cyberterrorist group in LINK VRAINS…

" *That leaves only Knights of Hanoi as the possible suspect for this phenomenon."* Kento thought. Depending on the situation, he might have to put his service on hold for a while.

Too focused on watching the news, neither Kento nor Kazue noticed the screen on Kazue's computer flickered, briefly showing a humanoid figure on the screen.

Network - 3 Months Later

After 5 years being on the run, Ai could finally return to his homeland again and reunite with his friends. With Knights of Hanoi defeated, he was free to go. Maybe they didn't miss him much since he's such a slacker. But still, however their reaction would be, Ai would be happy just to see them again.

He missed the times he spent with them. When Water Ignis scolded him for skipping work. When Earth Ignis told him to stay away from Water Ignis. When Flame Ignis lectured him about his duties. When Wind Ignis pulled a prank on him that he got mad. When he tried to approach the Light Ignis but only met with short answers. When he was riding on his favorite monster's head and enjoying the weather together. And Divine Ignis…

"Right… I wonder how he's doing… Hanoi never captures him. If they were, they wouldn't have bothered wasting so much of their time to catch me." He wondered.

For the past 5 years, he had completely lost contact with Divine Ignis, the only one who managed to escape from the Cyberse World with him. There was once a time he had contemplated finding him and working together, but he decided against it. It's better for them not to meet just yet, making things more difficult for Hanoi to find them separately.

Now that the Hanoi had been defeated, there was no need for them to hide anymore. Before returning to his home, he decided to look for

Divine Ignis so they could return together. However, even after three months of searching, he couldn't find him. But the news of Hanoi's defeat should've reached the entire network. Divine Ignis should've heard it by now and he'll return to the Cyberse World sooner or later. Maybe he had already returned ahead of him.

"These are the coordinates!" Ai stopped once he spotted a bulge among the sea of data. At long last, he's finally home.

"Release the Cyberse!"

Ai released the program he had created to hide the Cyberse World. A green sphere of data came out from the bulge as Ai returned the key he had been holding, opening the pathway to his home world.

"There it is! Cyberse World!"

Ai didn't wait for long and flew into the sphere, flying through dark red clouds, expecting to see the beautiful land filled with nature befitting each of their territories with the Cyberse Tower standing at the center.

That's why, the sight that welcomed him behind the dark clouds horrified him.

His home world had been desolated into a barren wasteland with the central tower missing. The sky was red and filled with nothing, but dark clouds and the pillars had been broken and fallen to the ground. The cities have been reduced to ruins and giant craters dot the land.

"No way! This is a lie, right?!" Ai yelled out in dismay.

He landed and quickly looked for his friends, calling them out, pleading for anybody to answer him. But there was no sign of anyone. No matter where he went, he only saw debris and rubble. He had been looking forward to being back home, only for this to happen…

A sound came from under one of the remains of the destroyed pillars. Ai slowly approached the rubble. From the opening, he saw a pair of familiar eyes brimming with tears.

"Riku… !"

Ai tear up upon recognizing who was under the rubble. His most favorite and loyal monster, Linkuriboh.

"Linkuriboh…"

He opened his arms. Upon recognizing its master, Linkuriboh came out from its hiding place and happily tackled its master.

"There, there… I'm glad you're okay." Dark Ignis soothed his monster.

However, his questions have yet to be answered. Where were the other Ignis? What happened to the Cyberse World? Other than Linkuriboh, was there really nobody else who survived?

"Kuri!"

Another familiar voice was heard. Turning behind them, the Dark Ignis and Linkuriboh saw someone approaching them. That white fur, green limbs, and silver halo above the head. Only one monster fit that description.

"Saint Kuriboh!" Ai hurriedly hugged the said Kuriboh, followed by Linkuriboh, which Saint Kuriboh returned the same.

"Wait, if you're here, does that mean Divine Ignis is here too?!" Ai asked with a hopeful look, turning his head right and left, looking for the sight of his close friend.

"Kuri…" A sad look from Saint Kuriboh was all that Ai needed to know that Divine Ignis was not with it.

"Why… just what happened… !"

Ai fell on his knees, punching the ground beneath in frustration.

To be continued in Yu-Gi-Oh! VRAINS: Divine Record

AUTHOR'S NOTE

How is it for a prologue? Do I get your attention? Maybe you're not pleased that Kento, who is supposed to be the main character in the upcoming series, didn't Duel in this prologue one-shot and only solves Duel Puzzle. But I hope you can understand it's only because I want to save it for the series, to give surprise once I published it. The series will take at the start of Season 2.

I'll be totally honest, this Duel Puzzle is taken from *YGO 5D's World Championship 2011: Over the Nexus* . I tried, but I couldn't come up with an interesting Duel Puzzle of my own. The ones I tried to make didn't look difficult or good enough. That's why I decided to take one from the game. Somehow writing Duel Puzzle is harder than writing the usual Duels. Hopefully, I can think up of a good Duel Puzzle of my own later and then replace this one with mine.

As far as I remembered, I don't think there was an explanation of when and how Playmaker got Accesscode Talker. And I also think it was a waste for it to only appear in the final episode. That's why I decided to incorporate Accesscode Talker with some original aspects of my AU.

Also, Tsurugi is Kento's pseudonym for his job, but in the upcoming series, he'll use a different avatar and pseudonym, which I won't reveal until I publish it.

Please look forward to the series that I'll publish soon.

See you again~

TRIVIA

- The outfit of Tsurugi's avatar, Shousei style uniform, is a Japanese school uniform during the Meiji Period. They were mostly worn by students who were given room and board in exchange for performing domestic duties while learning abroad.